

Acorn Heights Burnley

Enter and View Report

Wednesday 16th February 2022

1.30pm - 4.00pm



DISCLAIMER

This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors and residents who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.

Contact Details:

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Staff met during our visit:

Natalie Heaven (Registered Manager)
Anita McLaughlin (Registered Manager)
Sarah Walker (Care Manager)

Date and time of our visit:

Wednesday 16th February 2022
1.30pm - 4.00pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised

Representatives:

Maria Lord (Engagement Officer)

Acorn Heights Care Home

We will always care for you like our own family, thank you for letting us work in your home, and we will always treat you with dignity and respect, working together to bring happiness everyday into our home.



Introduction

Our role at Healthwatch Lancashire is to gather people's views and experiences, especially those that are hard to reach and seldom heard, to give them the opportunity to express how they feel about a service. This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives from Healthwatch Lancashire (HWL) who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced. The aim is to obtain the views and experiences of residents, relatives and staff and observe and assess the quality of services.

The team compile a report reflecting observations and feedback. Healthwatch Lancashire is an independent organisation, therefore we do not make judgements or express personal opinions. The report identifies aspects of good practice as well as possible areas of improvement. This is sent to the manager for their opportunity to respond. Where appropriate, Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to check the progress of improvements. The report is then published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk and sent to the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lancashire would like to thank registered managers Natalie Heaven and Anita McLaughlin, care manager Sarah Walker and the rest of the staff and residents for making us feel so welcome and for taking the time to speak to us during the visit.

General Information

Acorn Heights Care Home is privately owned by SJ Care Homes (Wallasey) Ltd with places for twenty-two residents. There were twenty-one residents at the time of our visit, although a resident for the final vacancy had been confirmed.

Information obtained from carehome.co.uk states they provide residential care for those living with dementia, a mental health condition, a learning disability, old age, and also for younger adults.

Methodology

The Enter and View representative made an announced visit on 16th February 2022 from 1.30pm - 4.00pm. We spoke to three residents and five staff members. No relatives were in attendance at the time of the visit.

Healthwatch Lancashire obtain the views and experiences of residents, relatives and staff. Conversations with each are adapted to capture individual experiences to help assess the quality of services. Conversations with residents were structured around four themes (Environment, Care, Food and Activities). Conversations with staff included their experiences of staffing levels, support and training. Relatives were asked to speak about their general experiences including how they felt about the service, if they feel involved and informed. The team also recorded their own observations on the environment, facilities and staff-resident interactions.

Summary:

Acorn Heights Care Home is a large, Grade II listed building, set back from the main road on the outskirts of Burnley town centre. It is conveniently placed within close reach of local amenities, and is accessible by public transport.

The care home provides residential care for up to twenty-two adults, including specialist mental health care for those who are vulnerable. The managers explained that places at the care home are in high demand due to its ability to provide short-term mental health crisis care, alongside long-term residencies. The facility is able to meet a large range of individual needs and offers much needed support and stability to those who have found it difficult to settle elsewhere. All residents are supported to retain independence and are encouraged to regularly access the local amenities in the nearby town centre.

The Healthwatch Lancashire representative was welcomed by the care manager on arrival and asked to follow the necessary COVID procedures. There had been some unexpected events earlier in the day, but the managers and staff were still incredibly welcoming and overwhelmingly positive about the visit. The representative observed the environment to be very informal and homely, with a 'lived-in' feel; the atmosphere was relaxed and friendly, with residents and staff engaging in conversation. There was also much joy when therapy dog Daisy (a one-year-old chocolate Labrador) made an appearance.

Three residents were happy to share their views, others felt more comfortable continuing to chat with each other or stay in their rooms, and some had chosen to go out in the care home minibus. Overall feedback from residents was extremely positive. All residents who shared their views were very happy with the care they received at Acorn Heights and were complimentary about the staff. One resident commented on the significant improvements that had been made over the past few years since the current management team had been in place *"Standards have improved dramatically - staff, hygiene, going out, cooking!"* There was some mixed feedback regarding bedroom sizes, but those who said they would prefer a bigger room also accepted that the sizes were *"completely adequate."* Residents spoken to, talked about having the *"freedom to go out"* and commented *"We've got our own minibus!"* However one resident who was unsure about the options available explained that they didn't go out much.

Unfortunately, there were no relatives available for the representative to speak to. However, the registered manager referred to the recent Quality Assurance Surveys, displayed in the hallway. The family, friends and advocates surveys identified limitations in communication from Acorn Heights, largely due to the pressures of the pandemic. This was openly addressed on the *"You said - We did"* section of the noticeboard, with an acknowledgement, an apology and a commitment to *"open effective communication again."*

The Healthwatch Lancashire representative spoke to five staff members in addition to the registered managers. All staff who shared their views were extremely happy to be working at Acorn Heights, and felt they received a lot of support from management, particularly with furthering their qualifications. The value of teamwork was highlighted as a real positive, with a staff member commenting *"The residents, the staff, it's like a family and it works."*

Enter and View observations

The external environment

Acorn Heights is a large, Grade II listed building, set back from the main road within its own grounds. It has clear, elevated signage, which is visible from the road and there are spaces for off-road parking available to the front of the building. The property has two large bay windows and an ornate entrance, decorated either side with attractive, trailing hanging baskets. Access can be gained via a wooden decking-style ramp, complete with safety handrail, leading to the front door, which was easily identifiable and secured with a coded door lock.

During the visit, the manager explained the challenges and costly implications associated with maintaining a listed building. However, the representative felt that some less expensive, cosmetic alterations could be made to the exterior, which is a little tired in places: particularly the paint on the front door and also at the rear of the property where there are signs of paint beginning to peel from the brickwork. Finally, a resurfacing of the parking area could be made to improve accessibility for those who use mobility equipment.

The internal environment/reception -first impressions

The representative was asked to sign the visitor's book, which was positioned on a narrow unit behind the front door. The area was small but organised, with face masks and disposable gloves available for visitors, and also a file for residents to sign in and out.

Healthwatch Lancashire provided Acorn Heights with a poster a week prior to our attendance, detailing the date and time of the visit so that residents, relatives and staff were aware we would be visiting. The poster was displayed on the internal side of the front door, alongside information for residents regarding COVID guidance and the testing schedule for residents and staff. The noticeboard on the adjacent wall, displayed Certificate of Registration documents and photographs of the registered managers. There was also a large television, used to display CCTV images as a way to ensure the welfare of residents. Cameras were only positioned in public areas within the home, and not in operation in bedrooms or bathroom facilities.

First impressions of the entrance hall and of the adjoining lounge and dining room, were of a clean and very homely environment. There was a sense of calm, and residents could be seen chatting in the comfortable lounge, watching TV together, or getting ready to go out. The representative was initially asked to take a seat in the dining room and was then invited into the office to be introduced to one of the registered managers.

The observation of corridors, public toilets and bathrooms

The corridors were clean and uncluttered, although due to the age and style of the building, some corridors were fairly narrow. As a result, the corridor leading to the bedrooms towards the rear of the property had suffered some damage and indentations to the walls due to traffic from wheelchairs or mobility aids. The manager explained that improvement work had been scheduled, and that this would include new safety flooring, decoration, and tongue and groove panelling, which would be more robust. The maintenance worker had started upgrading a section of the vinyl flooring, which he continued to work on during the visit. This did affect the aesthetic and cleanliness of this section, and the outside area at the back of the property was cluttered, but the representative could see that this was temporary and completely unavoidable.

Access could be gained to the upper floor and bedrooms via a large, carpeted staircase, or alternatively a spacious lift. The landing area was home to a leather armchair next to an arched, stained-glass window. The décor throughout was observed to be simple but effective, in-keeping with the style of the building. Wall space was largely being used for information boards. There were photographs to identify all staff and the activities board included pictures of the type of activities available, although there wasn't a specific timetable displayed.

Public toilets were accessible, with grab rails. They were clean with adequate provision of toiletries.

The lounges, dining and other public areas

The lounge area at Acorn Heights was observed as being a good size, with hard flooring throughout. The large bay window gave the room a lot of natural light, and the central fireplace was covered with recent Valentine's Day decorations, and birthday cards. Residents could be seen sitting comfortably in chairs, with side tables for drinks. Some of them were engaged in conversation and some were watching television. The dining room had space for twelve residents, and this was supplemented by further seating in the second lounge, towards the rear of the property. Staff explained that residents were invited and encouraged to interact with others at meal times, rather than eating alone in bedrooms. During the visit, tables were set prior to the evening meal, and residents were observed enjoying "*beef stroganoff*" or "*liver and onions*."

Observations of resident and staff interactions

The Healthwatch Lancashire representative observed the staff to be smartly dressed in uniform, wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment. There was one call bell heard during the visit, which was initially responded to by a manager who was nearby, but another member of staff arrived promptly to assist.

Staff were respectful of privacy and were observed knocking on bedroom doors prior to entry. It was made clear that bedrooms were the residents' own space, completely tailored to them. Furniture, bedding and decoration were all their own choice, and staff respected their decision to fill their rooms with things that were important to them.

Conversations between staff and residents could be heard as staff carried out their duties. It was very clear that staff held all the residents in high regard, and they could be seen demonstrating care and respect when they spoke with them or helped them move around the home. Staff were also observed implementing de-escalation techniques and remaining calm, professional and respectful at all times.

Additional information

Both registered managers spoke passionately about the level of care and support provided for the residents of Acorn Heights. They also spoke candidly about how it is very different from other provisions, but how their service is much needed. They clearly describe a home that warmly welcomes those who have previously experienced difficulties, whether it be through homelessness, exploitation, mental ill-health or substance abuse. Championing independence and autonomy was highlighted by all staff and management as an integral part of Acorn Heights.

Feedback from residents

Environment

Residents that shared their views gave mixed feedback about the bedrooms provided at Acorn Heights. One resident told our representative, *"I feel comfortable here. I can watch my TV in my room or I can go there for quiet time, and I've got a big, comfy sitting chair which is good."* Two of the residents would prefer a bigger bedroom, with one commenting "It's not that big - about the limit in size" and another explaining *"I'd prefer it bigger but it's completely adequate"* adding that there was *"big enough wardrobe space."* The level of lighting in the rooms when trying to read was raised as a concern for one resident, especially during the darker months, but they were happy for our representative to feed this back to the registered managers, who said they would look to see if they could rectify this.

Residents were happy that bedrooms were cleaned daily by staff, *"I'm happy for the staff to come into my room and clean"* and management explained that a deep clean happens once a week. Although privacy was observed to be completely respected by staff during the visit, one resident didn't think they had the ability to lock their room while they were out of the building, and were concerned that other residents could potentially have access to their room. Management explained that all bedrooms can be locked, but were happy to look into it and communicate back to residents.

Activities

Encouraging interaction in the local community, either independently or in groups supported by staff, could be seen to be an important part of life at Acorn Heights. The activities board included trips to local attractions, visits to nearby countryside, pubs and restaurants, and the option for 'retail therapy'. One resident spoke about enjoying trips out to Blackpool or Townley Park for ice-cream, proudly sharing *"We've got our own minibus!"*, whilst another explained that they enjoyed *"the freedom to go out and come and go as I please."* The manager had explained the signing in and out procedure, which included: recording information about where each resident was going, what they were wearing and expected return time. A resident confirmed, *"as long as you sign out, tell them roughly what time you'll be back it's fine, and I always have my mobile."* They continued, *"In the summer, I walk for miles! It keeps me physically fit and I get to see new things."* One resident explained that they didn't go out much as they didn't think it had been offered.

Although independence is promoted at Acorn Heights, equally there was observed to be some provision for interaction with others. One resident said, *"We play*

skittles, although my aim isn't always that good! We also have card games - I find it difficult to see the numbers but I still enjoy it." However, one resident explained they had a television in their bedroom but that there wasn't much to do. One resident described hobbies such as matchstick model making, and another referred to reading *"I love reading but my eyesight isn't good. I have one or two audio books and the library send me the Burnley Express that I can listen to. And they also got me a speaking clock so I know what time it is!"*

One resident told us about regular visits from the hairdresser and the fact that they enjoyed getting a manicure. However, a couple of the residents mentioned that they didn't have relatives or friends come to visit them. Some of the residents had lost touch with their own family members for a variety of reasons prior to living at Acorn Heights. This was explained further by one of the managers, who stressed the importance of Acorn Heights being a *"family"* for the people living there.

Care

All feedback regarding care from staff was extremely positive, including one longstanding resident commenting on the changes since the current managers had taken over a few years ago. *"The quality was not good before, when I first came. Standards have improved dramatically - staff, hygiene, going out, cooking!"* Other positive comments included *"Staff here are brilliant! I don't have a problem with any of them"* and even though one resident acknowledged there were some staff members who spoke more than others, they concluded *"They're very good, no complaints."*

Residents at Acorn Heights noticed that the staff could be flexible and respond to the varying levels of care needed. *"We all have good days and bad days, you know with the frustration of lockdown. But they really do listen and note things down."* One resident pointed out that they all care about each other *"I do sit in the lounge and listen to other people, and they listen to me. I try to put myself in their shoes."* It was also noted that the care was enhanced by positive interactions with Daisy, the therapy dog *"It's been so good for us in lockdown to have her. She follows me around. We lost our other one, which was sad."*

Residents were happy with levels of care, support with mobility or with independence; one was very impressed with receiving freshly laundered bed linen and having their room cleaned on a regular basis. More specific care needs appeared to be addressed on an individual basis. For example, one resident talked about visiting the dentist or seeing the chiropodist, another mentioned going to the hospital for scans and could be heard asking staff to update them on their next appointment.

Food

The food provided at Acorn Heights appeared to be popular with the residents our representative spoke to, and in addition to this, numerous residents could be seen enthusiastically tucking into their evening meal in the dining room. One resident commented on the quality and quantity of the food *“The food is great. Not everything will be to everyone’s taste, but I’m quite happy with it. There’s plenty of it!”*

Two residents were happy with the variety *“We have a choice of meals and the food is very good. It really is.”* It was also communicated that residents had an input into what was on the menu and that staff would find out what they liked and didn’t like *“If there’s something you like, they try to arrange it.”* This was further explained by staff, who said that feedback on menu choices is encouraged at the monthly residents’ meeting.

Staff views

Do you have enough staff when on duty?

Staff members explained how *“everyone helps out”* and there are *“plenty of staff”* when on duty. The care manager also identified how flexible they have been by covering or swapping shifts throughout the pandemic to sustain staffing levels.

Do you feel supported to carry out person centred care?

One staff member talked about the values of Acorn Heights and how person-centred care was at the core. They talked about care plans being regularly updated, and that staff are always kept informed of any changes important to residents *“even if they want to go by a different name, we are all told that.”*

Staff were keen to encourage residents to keep their independence, and said they felt supported to tailor their approach to individual needs *“It’s really important to us that they are happy, and not just left sitting in a corner watching TV.”* Another member described Acorn Heights as *“family orientated”* and that they advocate treating residents *“with complete dignity and respect.”* They gave an example of taking time to ensure residents were comfortable when being moved by a hoist.

Another staff member commented on the efforts made to involve residents in decision making, with residents’ meetings each month. They mentioned having theme nights and providing *“home-made, take-away type meals, such as curries, doner kebabs or ribs”* which reflected the preferences of residents.

Do you feel you have enough training to carry out your duties well?

It was clear from speaking to staff, that continuous training is a priority at Acorn Heights. All staff are required to take part in mandatory training, such as safeguarding, health and safety, first aid and moving and handling. Details of this is recorded and kept up to date on the training matrix. Staff are also supported to further their skills through completing further qualifications, with some staff progressing through NVQ Levels 4 and 5. Senior staff support those who are completing their qualifications and offer to run group sessions - *“Any problems at all, you get support with.”*

Are you happy working here?

Staff did not hesitate in their response to this question, which was a resounding “Yes!” One staff member explained what made it such a good place to work *“I love it! It’s not your normal care home, there’s always something different, never a dull moment and all the staff get on.”* This was reiterated by another staff member who said, *“Every day is different, and we all look out for each other. The residents, the staff, it’s like a family and it works.”*

The positive relationship between staff and management was really noticeable in the responses, with a staff member explaining *“We are a TEAM! It’s not like this everywhere you work - this is my favourite place out of all the homes I’ve worked in.”* In addition to this, it appeared that COVID had brought staff even closer together. In fact, staff said they had been willing to move into a caravan at the home to be able to continue to look after the residents and keep them safe.

Would you be happy to recommend this care home to a close relative?

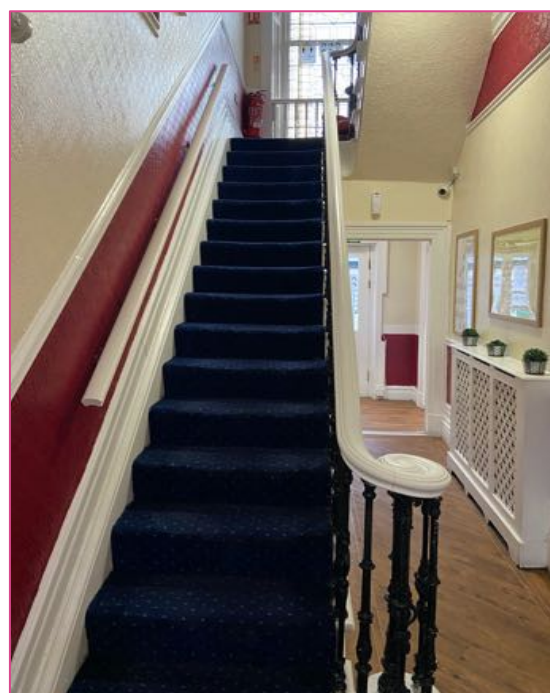
Staff confirmed that if they had either a close relative, or a friend who they felt would benefit from the type of support offered at Acorn Heights, then they would be more than happy to recommend.

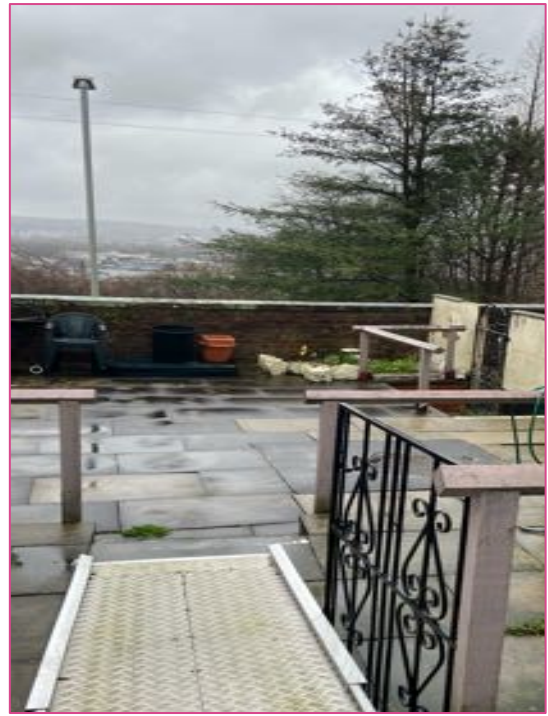
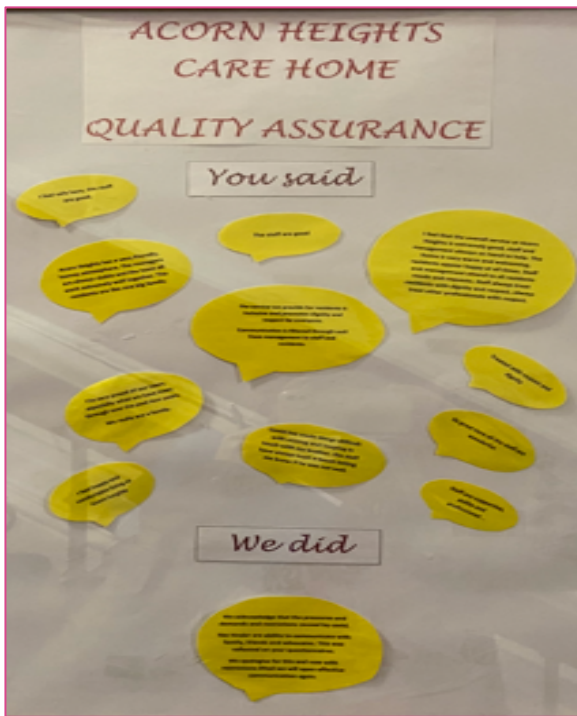
Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement have been highlighted from residents and staff feedback. These are not Healthwatch Lancashire recommendations but rather, areas for improvement suggested by residents and staff.

- . Consider ways to improve lighting to facilitate reading.
- . Ensure residents are aware of how to keep their rooms locked when they go out for the day.
- . Consider ways of making all residents aware of what activities are available.

Pictures taken during the visit





Response from provider

Areas identified for improvement	Action from provider	When by	Comments
Consider ways to improve lighting to facilitate reading.	The resident likes to do arts and crafts in his room, so we purchased a desk lamp which he can position into place for close work the resident is very happy with this.	Completed	
Ensure residents are aware of how to keep their rooms locked when they go out for the day.	All residents that wish to have a key for there room are given a key. This was reiterated in our residents meeting and any one wishing to have a key now has a key.	Completed	
Consider ways of making all residents aware of what activities are available.	Our two activities co-ordinators are completing one to one sessions with all residents as part of their role. They will ensure all residents are aware of all activities available as well as working with them to ensure they are able to maintain all their own personal interests.	April 2022	
Completed by	(Name) Natalie Heaven	Date	01.04.2022

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